Retirement Guide for Faculty and Chairs

The Guide has three parts:

Part 1. The Retirement Process
Part 2. The Process of Becoming Emeritus/a
Part 3. The Perks and Opportunities Associated with Retirement

Content is extracted from sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 of the Faculty Handbook. If you have questions please contact CAPE or DeanOfFaculty@cornell.edu.

Part 1. The Retirement Process

1. First Steps

Become Familiar with the University's Retirement Resources

The Office of Human Resources maintains a pre-retirement planning webpage with links to many important resources. Financial planning and health care planning are central. A good place to start are the benefit overviews for endowed faculty and for contract college faculty.

Other valuable sources of information about retirement are colleagues who have recently gone through the process, the Cornell Academics and Professors Emeriti (CAPE), and Cornell Retirees Association (CRA).

It is never too early to begin thinking about the finances associated with retirement. Interaction with Medicare is required several months before your 65th birthday.

Understand How Phased Retirement Works

Eligible faculty members who are less than seventy years old may choose to reduce their job duties prior to retirement. This is called phased retirement and it requires a signed mutual agreement between you, your department, and the dean of your college. The agreement identifies an official retirement date, a workload percent, and the responsibilities that must be discharged during the phased retirement period. If the workload percent is (for example) 75%, then you would receive 75% of your normal salary. In addition to providing a nice transition to full retirement, a phased retirement has economic value because the university continues to pay benefits as if you were a full-time faculty member.

Identify Your Contacts

There is a measure of non-uniformity across the colleges in terms of just who participates with the candidate during the retirement process. A good way to find out the local arrangements that apply to you is to have a conversation with your college HR representative. Department managers and associate
deans may also be involved at various stages in the process. Establish clear communication channels to all who are involved.

2. Have a Conversation with Your Chair

These discussions are typically spread out over time. They should be initiated at least one year before you decide to retire or one year before you decide to enter phased retirement. The idea is for the Chair and the candidate to reach an understanding about resources and other key issues that are of mutual importance.

A Checklist of Talking Points for the Candidate

The candidate should be prepared to engage on these topics:

1. anticipated academic interests that may be pursued after retirement.
2. the current state of graduate student supervision, how it might continue or wind down.
3. the current state of external funding, how it might continue or wind down.
4. the state of all discretionary funding accounts and they might be utilized after retirement.
5. plans for a sabbatical leave before retiring.
6. anticipated administrative support needs.
7. receiving US mail.
8. anticipated desk/space needs.
9. anticipated IT support needs.
10. the desired level of participation in department business, e.g., staying on mailing lists.
11. the desired level of participation in college business, e.g., staying on mailing lists.
12. the likelihood of living in the Ithaca area full time, part time, or not at all.
13. concerns about indemnification.
14. all of the above in the context of some phased retirement agreement.

A Checklist of Talking Points for the Chair

The Chair (or suitable alternative) should be prepared to engage on these topics:

1. organizing a recognition event to show appreciation.
2. the process for becoming emeritus/a.
3. where to get answers to HR-related questions, typically HR office in the candidate’s College.
4. the department’s space situation.
5. the extent to which the department can supply administrative and IT support.
6. the rules associated with attending department meetings and voting on such matters as hiring and promotion.
7. the process for accessing the $2K reimbursement account.
8. hire-back possibilities that relate to teaching, advising, outreach, and administration.
9. opportunities to volunteer.
10. how the dean must authorize the continued use of an endowed chair, both as a title and as a possible source of future funding.
11. what a phased retirement arrangement might look like.
3. **Formalizing the Agreement with the Chair**

    The dialog with the Chair eventually leads to a retirement agreement. Conversations with central HR or with the College HR person are sometimes part of the process.

    If there is a phased retirement plan, it is detailed in writing and signed by the candidate, the chair, and the dean.

    If there are resource issues associated with full retirement, then they too must be put in writing and signed by the candidate, chair, and dean.

    If there is a request for emeritus/a status, then it can only be filed after there is an official retirement date. A guarantee of emeritus/a status is never part a retirement agreement.

4. **The Actual Transition**

    Benefit Services will contact the candidate with information about the health care plan for retirees and related matters such as Medicare Parts A, B, and D. They will also describe various life insurance issues that require your attention.

    Several months before retirement the candidate should schedule an appointment with your retirement account vendor, i.e., **TIAA** (1-800 732-8353) or **Fidelity** (1-800 642-7131).

    Upon retirement the candidate should visit B-07 Day Hall to pick up an updated Cornell ID.

**Part 2. The Process for Becoming Emeritus/a**

In the following, it is important to distinguish between “retiring” and “become emeritus.” Retirement is *human resources event* whereas becoming emeritus is an *academic event*.

Upon retirement, a university professor, full professor, or associate professor who has been a tenured member of the University Faculty for ten or more years may be considered for emeritus/a status.

Awarding the title of university professor emeritus/a, professor emeritus/a, or associate professor emeritus/a shall be based upon the career contributions of the candidate through a combination of teaching, research, advising, administration, extension, and outreach. An overall record of meritorious service to the university is expected.

The candidate supplies a curriculum vitae to the department chair together with a cover letter that includes the date of retirement and a request to be considered for either emeritus or emerita status.

If the request is from a full professor, then it is reviewed and voted upon by the full professors and the emeritus faculty in the candidate’s department. If the request is from an associate professor, then it is reviewed and voted upon by the tenured professors and the emeritus faculty in the candidate’s department. The result of the vote and the chair’s recommendation to either approve or deny emeritus/a status is communicated to the dean of the candidate’s college. The dean reviews the dossier and makes a recommendation to the provost.
If either the dean or chair recommendation is negative, then the candidate is so informed by the provost and given the opportunity to respond in writing within ninety days. The final decision to approve emeritus/a status is made by the provost, perhaps in consultation with the dean of faculty and others.

Notes

1. The current policy is authorized by Senate Resolution 120 (November 2017). Here is the rationale.
2. “Emeritus/a” is a title modifier, a change authorized by the Board of Trustees (January 2018). See Article XVII of the University Bylaws. A retiring professor may become a professor emeritus or professor emerita. A retiring associate professor may become an associate professor emeritus or an associate professor emerita.
3. Regarding the vote, the Chair is expected to make a reasonable effort to contact the emeriti. Conversely, emeriti should always make sure that their department has up-to-date contact information.
4. Contact the deanoffaculty@cornell.edu if there are special circumstances that make it difficult to execute this policy, e.g., the retiring candidate is the only full professor in the department.
5. Holders of certain administrative positions can qualify for emeritus/a status. Rules and process.

Part 3. Perks and Opportunities

In the following, retired faculty means all retired faculty whether they have emeritus/a status or not. From the WorkDay/HR point of view (a) a retired faculty who does not have emeritus/a status is a retired academic, (b) a faculty member who is on the university payroll is regarded as an active faculty member, and (c) a retired faculty member who is not on the university payroll is regarded as an inactive faculty member. Note: just because WorkDay classifies you as “inactive” doesn’t mean you are!

1. Health

Benefits

Cornell offers a wide variety of healthcare benefits and programs for retired faculty. There is no mandatory age for retirement for Cornell faculty. However, to receive certain benefits you must be at least age 55 and have ten years of credited service at the university.

More information for contract college faculty.
More information for endowed college faculty.

Wellness Program

The annual membership fee is waived for emeritus/a faculty. You must have a Cornell ID card that identifies you as an emeritus/a faculty member when you apply for membership. Wellness Program details.

Cornell Health

Regarding Cornell Health, all retirees are eligible for triage services at the health center, pharmacy services, flu vaccination clinics, and the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program. Cornell Health access for retirees, including those with emeritus status, are not eligible for physical therapy services.
2. Transportation

Parking on Campus

Retired faculty are eligible for free O-permit or R-permit parking. Emeritus/a who maintain a campus office may request a Central-tier parking permit. You must have a Cornell ID card that identifies you as a retired faculty member when you apply for these parking privileges. More details and contact information.

TCAT Bus Service

Retired faculty get free service in Zone 1 which includes the City of Ithaca, Cornell, Ithaca College, Kendal, the hospital, the airport, and the mall. You must have a Cornell ID card that identifies you as a retired faculty member when you use TCAT. In lieu of an annual parking permit, retirees may choose a no-fee OmniRide Transit pass, which provides full TCAT transit privileges, seven days a week. More details and contact information.

Campus-to-Campus Bus Service

Emeritus/a faculty are entitled to the same discounted rate as all non-retired faculty. More details and contact information.

3. Communication

Email and Zoom

Retired faculty continue to receive messages sent to their Cornell email address. There are several ways that this service can be implemented. Emeritus faculty also have free access to Zoom. Cornell Information Technologies handles email for all retired faculty. Zoom is Cornell’s video and web conferencing service.

University Directory

A retired faculty member must have emeritus/a status in order to be listed in the online University Directory. Entries can be edited through WhoAmI.

4. Campus Life

Library Access

Emeritus Faculty are considered to be “active faculty” in regard to library access. This implies access to all electronic journals, ebooks, and just about all the databases resources available via the Library Homepage. Loan periods and other services available for retired faculty are described here.

Taking Courses

All retired faculty can enroll in up to six credits hours per semester at no charge. Just “sitting in” requires the approval of the instructor.

Office of Continuing Education and Summer Sessions handles the registration paperwork.
Attending Events and Lectures

There are many, many interesting events on campus each week. Handy ways to keep informed include the Cornell Events Calendar, the Cornell Sun, and the Cornell Chronicle. The Cornell Academics and Professors Emeriti sponsors a monthly lecture series.

Athletic Events

Emeritus/a faculty and retired faculty (with 25+ years of service) get two free tickets to all athletic events (except Men’s hockey). Admission requires a Cornell ID card that identifies you as an emeritus/a faculty member or as a retired faculty member with 25+ years of service. Additional information about tickets to athletic events is here.

5. Voting Rights

Faculty Senate

Emeritus/a faculty retain membership in the University Faculty and can vote in its elections. Emeritus/a faculty can vote in elections for the Dean of Faculty and for candidates who are running for membership on the University Faculty Committee and the Nominations and Elections Committee. Faculty Senate Meetings are open to all retired faculty. The emeritus/a faculty have one voting member in the Senate and that individual is sponsored through the Cornell Academics and Professors Emeriti.

College Meetings

The frequency of college meetings varies considerably from college to college as do voting rights. Consult with your college dean about specific details.

Department Meetings

A department meeting may be about curriculum, requirements, promotion, or hiring. Whether you can attend and vote may depend upon the topic. Consult with your department chair about specific details.

6. Teaching and Research

Office Space

An emeritus/a faculty member actively engaged in teaching or research may retain a private office at the discretion of the unit if space is available.

Emeritus/a faculty who remain engaged in unit activities but not to the extent of specific teaching or research responsibilities, may be provided shared or open plan office space if space is available within a unit. These shared offices are intended to allow an individual to maintain contact with the unit, discipline, and colleagues. Office space guidelines

Laboratory/Experimental Space

An emeritus/a faculty member who maintains an active research program may be provided laboratory space at the discretion of the unit if space is available.

An active research program is characterized by:
(a) sufficient external funding to support their research activities including the support of technical assistants, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students.

(b) continuing contributions to the department’s academic mission and vision;

(c) demonstrable contributions to the discipline through the propagation of the products of their research in relevant mediums (e.g. books, articles, chapters, patents, presentations, etc.)

**Hire Back**

Emeritus/a faculty are eligible for hire-back arrangements for specified periods of time in accordance with the needs of the department and college.

Emeritus status is a continuing appointment status, inactive until a “rehire” appointment is approved.

Because they involve a change in employment status, hire back arrangements require careful consultation with the Office of Human Resources.

**External Funding**

Participation as a Principal Investigator is conditional on the availability of resources as determined by the department chairperson, dean, and/or center director.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Research is responsible for the policy that governs principal investigator eligibility. Any salary paid to the faculty member in such a case must appear as an approved item in the agreement with the sponsor. Such post-retirement appointments are reviewed periodically and always when a new agreement with a sponsor is proposed.

**Graduate Student Supervision**

When graduate faculty members retire or resign from the University, they resign their membership on the graduate faculty. Graduate faculty members who retire or resign from the University automatically remain on special committees on which they were serving at the time of retirement/resignation for up to one year.

If the retired faculty member leaves the Ithaca or Geneva area and wishes to remain on a special committee beyond one year, the student must petition to have the former graduate faculty member appointed as co-chair or minor member. If a faculty member resigned from the university and wishes to remain on a special committee beyond one year, the student must petition to have the former graduate faculty member appointed as a co-chair or minor member.

**Graduate School Professor**

By vote of their graduate fields, emeritus/a faculty may be granted the title Graduate Professor of (Field). This designation, which can be used on external grant and contract applications, enables an individual to retain the rights of other graduate faculty in the field and to submit grant and contract applications that provide up to 50 percent of the individual’s pre-retirement salary.

The General Committee of the Graduate School has approved this title for renewable five-year terms. A Graduate School Professor may continue to serve either as chair or minor member of special committees on which he or she was serving at the time of retirement. Otherwise, a Graduate School Professor may serve only as minor member or co-chair, and only if he or she resides in the Ithaca area and the committee includes a second or minor member in the student’s major field. More details [here](#).
Legal Defense and Indemnification

While retirement as an emeritus/a professor does not automatically confer coverage under the University’s Legal Defense and Indemnification Policy, emeritus/a professors may be so covered if they are performing services for the University at the prior written request of the dean of the college or director of the division upon approval by the Provost, even if they receive no remuneration for such services.

Coverage would be with respect to claims that arise from authorized duties. To qualify, an individual must also request such defense and/or indemnification and cooperate in the defense of any action or proceeding as provided in the University’s Legal Defense and Indemnification Policy. Here is the formal policy.

Reimbursement for Professional Activity

Upon retirement, an emeritus/a faculty member may receive $2,000 per year from their college for a period of five years for reimbursement of professional activities.

Colleges may have specific rules about carrying forward unspent funds. There may also be a requirement about reporting how the funds were utilized.